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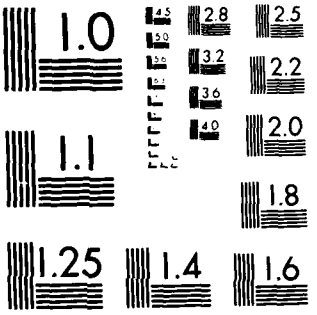

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by

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Report suggests that Soviet/German concept of naval operational art needs to be defined in order to better understand how likely enemies and allies will fight in a future war. Author suggests that if concept has merit, it might be applied to planning offensive anti-carrier operations against new generation of Soviet carrier battle groups.

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Anti-carrier Warfare and Naval Operational Art

by

James J. Tritten

The U.S. military has only recently taken offensive anti-carrier warfare operations against enemy carrier battle groups seriously. Why? Because we have not had to since 1945. There have not been any adversaries who have had attack carrier battle groups since the WW II air strikes against Formosa and the defeat of the Japanese in the Battles of the Philippine Sea and Leyte Gulf. Those conditions will change as the Soviet Union deploys its next generation of air capable surface combatants and they evolve into what we in the West know as true multi-purpose aircraft carriers.

The U.S. Navy and NATO have already developed a sound maritime strategy to deal with the Warsaw Pact navies. Strategic thinking in NATO navies is at a high point and will probably remain so over the next decades. Naval tactical thought is also going through a renaissance although the optimal tactical employment of individual weapons systems has always been a strong point for the Allies.

U.S. and NATO maritime strategy explains what types of forces will be applied where in the world to achieve certain objectives. Tactics for individual platforms show us how to utilize specific weapons systems in the most efficient manner. There is a category of warfare that bridges strategy and tactics that is known as operational art. The term came from the German and has found a home in the Soviet military. Perhaps the best parallel term in

naval parlance is standardized fleet tactics. Simply put: strategy tells us where, when, and why to fight; operational art is the framework for fighting a combined arms force; and tactics is the method of employing individual units and weapons systems.

Operational art could be the framework for addressing how to best employ our combined (all services) arms against the emerging Soviet carrier battle group threat that somewhat resembles Allied WW II multi-carrier task force operations. Operational art could be the framework for answering questions such as: do we need to attack and destroy enemy carrier battle groups in a particular theater of military operations in order to achieve our broad strategic objectives; or the classic question of where to best intercept the sea lines of communication - at the terminals or along the route; or how to best defend convoys - with direct defense or the indirect approach.

Lacking a ready made "cook book" (nor should there be one) on how to best attack the threat platforms of the future, and currently lacking a framework for naval operational art, we should consider creating such an architecture and using offensive anti-carrier warfare (ACW) as the case study to flesh it out. Simply put, we should evaluate past combat experience and the wealth of knowledge that we already have concerning fleet air defense and over the horizon targeting, so that we can then deal with the substance of offensive ACW. This report will propose such a plan so that we can best understand future force and training needs.

Operational art as a concept is not well understood by

navies; indeed there are many who argue that such a concept is neither real nor required; contemporary naval tactical planning being all that is required. As our fighting capabilities shift over time, due to the impact of less support for military forces or due to the impact of ever increasing costs of weapons systems, we are simply going to have to turn to better strategic, operational, and tactical planning as a force multiplier. Operational art could be the glue that can hold together our strategy and tactics.

The U.S. Army and the National Defense University have been investigating the concept of operational art and appear to be headed in the direction of taking it more seriously. The U.S. Naval War College has begun to explore the issue and the first course on naval operational art is now being taught at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School. VADM Henry Mustin's U.S. Second Fleet "Fighting Instructions" are an example of attempting to deal with the operational level of warfare although the term operational art is not used. Germans have accepted the operational art concept for years and should be in a position to assist us coming to grips with it.

The most important reason for trying to define operational art is that the Soviet armed forces have a naval operational art. There already is a large body of available Soviet naval literature translated into English. We should do reverse engineering to learn what it is that the Soviet have and get an appreciation for the concept. It is Soviet naval operational art that will govern how the Warsaw Pact will be employed in offensive ACW against the U.S. and NATO navies. It is Soviet operational art

that we have essentially already prepared for in our existing defensive ACW tactics.

If there was ever a project that need to be "Joint," and under the leadership of naval officers, it is the study of operational art and consideration of whether or not we need to create a naval operational art. Our leading military intellectual organizations, such as Strategic Studies Group at the U.S. Naval War College, the strategic planning faculty at the Naval Postgraduate School, the Strategic Concepts Development Center at the U.S. National Defense University, Federal Executive Fellows assigned to varying institutions and similar national organizations working in close coordination with the the NATO Defence College, the International Military Staff, and similar international groups appear to be the best places to take the lead and create the framework for helping the U.S. and NATO to fight smarter in the next century.

If we decide that there is indeed some merit to the concept, we should turn to our war-fighting naval commanders-in-chief to actually prepare a practical naval operational art. CINCLANT, CINCPAC, SACLANT, SACEUR, and CINCHAN could draw upon the existing body of knowledge for how to fight in their respective geographic areas. They can draw upon the various national tactical development groups that have addressed the operational level of warfare in specific theaters of military operations.

The U.S. and NATO navies are already extremely good at their understanding of, and in preparations for, fleet air defense. We have studied the open-source literature that explains Soviet

concepts of offensive operations against aircraft carriers. We have watched Soviet exercises and understand the capabilities of their weapons systems. We have taken our own defensive ACW very seriously for years since we recognize that Soviet offensive capabilities stress us. What we need to do is to apply our expertise about defensive ACW to offensive concepts and operations in order to stress the Soviet Navy in the same manner.

Western military establishments have a ready-made source of information on offensive anti-carrier warfare: the experiences of our own forces that have for years acted at aggressors during numerous fleet exercise. Our own military establishments have formed adversary units whose function it is to conduct raids on our own carrier battle groups (CVBGs) during training. Have any of these forces ever thought through their experiences in attacking Western CVBGs in terms of how they might attack Soviet units? We should be able to draw on this exercise data, analyze it, and determine the answers to such operational art questions as: (1) to achieve massing against an enemy CVBG, should we employ many low profile air platforms such as cruise missiles and F-5s or do a few large but very capable units such as B-52s have a better chance; or (2) are small diesel submarines as effective as larger nuclear ones in penetrating CVBG possible even if strategic warning is given?

Instead of Western naval leaders worrying about the use of Soviet anti-ship cruise and even ballistic missiles against our CVBGs, let us create planning problems in the Kremlin by having <u>them</u> worry about a multiplicity of threats against their ships.

Let's make Fleet Admiral Chernavin's job selling his navy to the Politburo as difficult as possible. Perhaps we can make it easy for the Soviet Defense Ministry to say "no" to requests for a bigger and more offensive fleet by showing them that the West has already thought through and can counter any planned capability that exceeds defense of the homeland and bastions.

Another source of already developed expertise that can serve to enhance our creation of an offensive ACW operational art is our concept of multi-platform over-the-horizon (OTH) targeting. Here is an existing body of naval operational concepts that somewhat approximates what is termed operational art. When the Soviets deploy multiple carrier battle groups, our existing OTH will have to be enhanced anyway. We can build on our existing body of knowledge and simultaneously learn what operational art is.

Our existing OTH will have to be changed to account for a more robust threat and to better utilize the more limited numbers of assets that are likely to be in our armed forces in the future. If as the former U.S. Secretary of the Navy says, a modern U.S. aircraft carrier can bring the equivalent firepower of forty WW II carriers, it is up to us to also recognize that the strategies, operations, and tactics that one would employ if he had forty carriers are not the same when we actually only have one.

Taking a page from the Soviet book and understanding their view of combined arms (all service) operations may also be in order. Many of our current OTH and other fleet operations make

full accounting for the wide range of naval platforms that can be used against enemy surface targets. We already exploit the many advantages, in certain joint operations, by combining assets from other services for the completion of specific missions. Perhaps we can learn something by just considering how the Soviets plan to go to war?

The Soviet concept of multi-service operations, under the operational control of naval commanders while in the oceanic theaters of operations, or under the control of TVD and front commanders in continental theaters of operations should be explored and compared to our own joint experiences. The Soviets employ a more than simply what we refer to as electronics warfare. The fleet can extend the air defense perimeter of the homeland air defense forces. Soviet methods of achieving survivability of their ballistic missile submarines by active defense is well known. Perhaps the well integrated Soviet concept of combined arms amphibious warfare that makes full use of all services and the "civilian " merchant marine is the best example of different concepts of operations that can be considered operational art.

We know how and where to train global and naval strategists. We already train and exercise naval officers in multi-carrier operations and tactics. What may still be needed, however, is the training and education of military officers in the operational level of war in terms of multi-service, combined nuclear and conventional warfare. Do we train officers to command and employ the multiplicity of diverse forces that

existed in WW II? Is there a point to revisiting the combined arms experiences of that war? Has enough time passed to impartially discuss the command and control problems of the Battle of Leyte Gulf or is it best to assume that there will always be "fog" in war?

We should look at our historical experiences in successful anti-carrier warfare against the Japanese while that generation of heroes is still available for advice. Were our successful campaigns a result of intuitive operational art concepts of operations or were they simply due to good naval (single service) tactics? Was there a conscious decision to defeat the Japanese navy by the attrition of pilots rather than carrier hulls or was this discovered only during after action analyses?

We know that the Japanese learned at the Battle of Midway that they had insufficiently prepared for defensive fleet operations and defense of their carriers. Did not the Battle of Midway refute the conventional wisdom of some in the 1930s who said land-based air power (alone) would be able to defeat an enemy fleet that would approach the shores of the U.S? None of the B-17s, B-26s, or PBYs that participated in that battle sunk any enemy ships. These are concepts of operational art and have their parallels today.

Even if the U.S. does not consciously recognize and have naval operational art, do other nations? We should at least ask. If there was an operational art in World War II, including offensive anti-carrier warfare, should we re-create and build upon it, or have the qualitative changes in the types of naval forces and the weapons available made the lessons of history

irrelevant? Is there a parallel in a future debate between OTH using missiles vs. aircraft and the debates of the 1930s over battleships vs. carriers? What will the role be for naval aviation if the primary strike platform against Soviet carrier battle groups becomes sea-launched missiles, torpedoes, or ballistic missiles?

If there is utility to studying the past war, should we not also take advantage of our former enemies and learn if they had an operational art for offensive anti-carrier warfare against us? The Italians, Germans, and the Japanese all could provide inputs on what types of operations were found to be best employed when striking British and American aircraft carrier task groups. A cooperative historical research project under a NATO fellow seems most appropriate. The U.S. Center for Naval Analyses has already done some of this when they looked at the experiences of defending against Japanese kamakazi attacks as a surrogate for gaining insights on defense against Soviet cruise missiles.

We should recall that history tells us that no U.S. fleet carrier was sunk by a kamakazi and the USS SARATOGA hull survived a 20 kiloton air burst at the Bikini tests. The U.S. Naval Institute probably has a unique ability to make its oral history and similar files available to researchers. What better way to use the wealth of historical data that they have accumulated than to attempt to find its relevancy today? Recent combat experience should not be overlooked either: the Falklands war for example. Naval intelligence services should be able to tell us who else, besides the USSR, since the end of World War II, has attempted or

even planned anti-carrier warfare.

Wargaming is another methodology that can and should be employed to address Soviet carrier battlegroup vulnerability. A best, worst, and "reasonable" threat case for the future Soviet Navy should be gamed against a wide range of potential force mixes. Gaming will not provide the answers as to what types and how many forces we need in the next century against these likely threats, but they can lead to insights, surface ideas, and provide data that should be subjected to rigorous analysis. Gaming is the ideal environment to test varying theories of operational art.

From analysis of the ACW issue, a number of useful products can arise. First, we may better be able to prioritize our acquisition of forces that can place the most leverage against the likely threats to the nation. Second, we can ensure that we educate our leaders and train our operational commanders to fight smarter in a qualitatively new environment. Third, we can begin to think through possible Soviet naval aviation developments/ deployments that we may want to attempt to influence and control by the use of arms control as a supplement to good military preparation.

Arms control has been used by the Soviets for years to enter our defense decision-making process; let's reverse the process. We should not think in terms of only military solutions to military problems. If we can prevent or minimize the impact of naval threats to the nation by a combination of military preparedness and negotiated agreements, we should explore both. However, we should not expect nor ever allow arms control to

become an end in itself or a substitute for proper defenses.

If we perceive the Soviet CVBG threat as being significant and a first order Alliance problem, then we should be prepared to adopt a long-term strategic plan to help the Soviets to decide not to build them. For example, can we stress the Soviet economy sufficiently to make it unlikely that rubles will be available for the construction of forces that would be more bothersome to us? One example of such a possible action is the retention of a manned bomber force by the NATO nations. By doing so, we may force the Soviets into a very costly and man intensive defensive posture making it more likely that funds will not be available for new naval forces that would be capable of new missions. If the strategy failed, we would end up with military forces that if properly employed, could be useful against those enemy carrier battle groups.

What emerges from these considerations is an opportunity to be very forward looking and approach an emerging problem in a top-down logical manner. We will not have this threat of multiple Soviet carrier battle groups in the 1980s and probably not in the 1990s. But it is likely that we will have to face this issue in the next century. the time is <u>now</u> to decide on the best force mix and the solutions are likely to also require long lead times and it is not too early to consider them. The strategic planning decision needs to be made now to get into the offensive ACW business by the year 2000.

U.S. and NATO maritime strategy is forward-based, offensive, and should cause the Soviets to react during a crisis or war in a

manner that enhances the deterrence and will terminate the confrontation on terms that are favorable to the Alliance. Our tactics are the finest that our fleet commanders can devise. What we may still need, however, is a naval concept of operations at the operational level of warfare, that will maximize our joint effectiveness against the Soviet multi-carrier battle groups of the future. We at least should research the issue and define what it is that the concept is all about.

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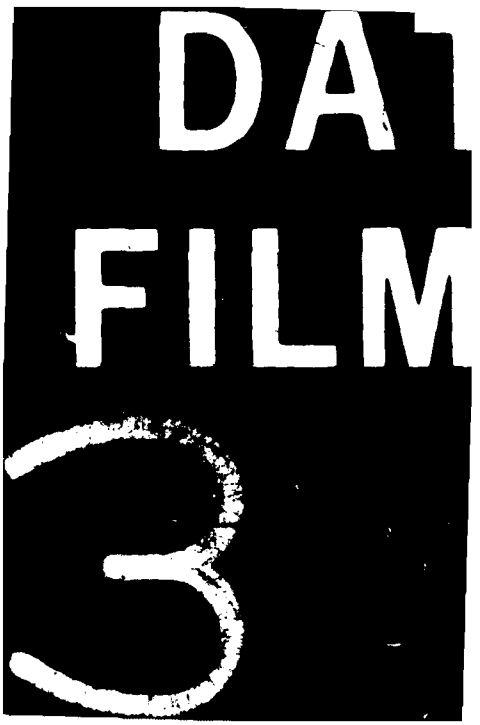
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